

**ABSTRACT**

The invention relates to a lithographic apparatus including an illumination system for providing a projection beam of radiation, a support structure for supporting patterning means, the patterning means serving to impart the projection beam with a pattern in its cross-section, a dust-tight storage container defining a storage space for storing patterning structures, wherein the storage container is arranged to be coupled with a transfer container such that the transfer container for exchanging patterning structures between the transfer container and the lithographic apparatus through a closeable passage between the transfer container and the storage container, a substrate table for holding a substrate, and a projection system for projecting the patterned beam onto a target portion of the substrate. Furthermore, the invention relates to a method of using such an apparatus.